

Message Text

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ACTION EA-06

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FM AMEMBASSY SAIGON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1097

INFO CINCPAC HONOLULU

AMCONSUL HONG KONG

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY PARIS

USLO PEKING

AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH

AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

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LIMDIS

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: EAID UR VN

SUBJECT: SOVIET MILITARY AID TO NORTH VIETNAM

REF : (A) MOSCOW 18215; (B) MOSCOW 18319; (C) MOSCOW 18390;
(D) MOSCOW 18572

1. AS REFTELS CLEARLY INDICATE THE SOVIETS ARE OBVIOUSLY TAKING
CONSIDERABLE PAIN TO SOFT PEDAL THE MILITARY AID COMPONENT OF
RECENT DISCUSSIONS IN MOSCOW LEADING TO SIGNATURE OF AID
AGREEMENTS WITH THE DRV AND "PRG". IF THE BALTIMORE SUN
DISPATCH FROM MOSCOW TRANSMITTED IN THE DECEMBER 12 WIRELESS
FILE IS ANY INDICATOR THEY APPEAR TO BE QUITE SUCCESSFUL IN
CONVEYING THIS IMPRESSION.

2. THERE ARE SEVERAL FACTS HOWEVER WHICH SUGGEST A CERTAIN
AMOUNT OF SKEPTICISM MAY BE JUSTIFIED WITH RESPECT TO THESE
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CLAIMS OF BENIGN INTENTIONS AS WELL AS THE SOVIET CANDOR WHICH

IS THE SUBJECT OF REF B.

(A) THERE MAY HAVE BEEN NO MENTION OF MILITARY AID IN PUBLIC BUT AS SUGGESTED BY EMBASSY MOSCOW IT SEEMS DOUBTFUL THAT THE DRV DEPUTY DEFENSE MINISTER SIMPLY CAME ALONG TO MOSCOW FOR THE RIDE (REF A).

(B) AS REPORTED IN REF D GENERAL KULKOV, THE SOVIET DEPUTY DEFENSE MINISTER AND CHIEF OF THE ARMED FORCES GENERAL STAFF, WILL VISIT HANOI THIS MONTH. WE UNDERSTAND HE WILL BE IN NORTH VIETNAM FOR A FULL WEEK. THIS IS CLEARLY FAR MORE THAN WOULD BE REQUIRED FOR A COURTESY APPEARANCE ON THE DECEMBER 22 30TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE VPA. IT IS DOUBTFUL THAT KULIKOV WILL SPEND THE REST OF HIS TIME SINGING CHRISTMAS CAROLS. IT SHOULD ALSO BE NOTED THAT THE VISIT COMES AT A TIME WHEN HANOI HAS KICKED OFF THE OPENING PHASES OF A HIGH INTENSITY DRY SEASON MILITARY OFFENSIVE WHICH IS ALREADY PRODUCING CASUALTIES AT A RATE APPROACHING THAT OF THE DAILY AVERAGE CASUALTY RATE DURING THE 1972 OFFENSIVE.

(C) FINALLY, WE RECALL THAT SOVIET DEPUTY DEFENSE MINISTER BATITSKIY LED A GROUP OF SOVIET AIR DEFENSE EXPERTS ON VISITS TO HANOI ONE WEEK BEFORE THE OPENING OF THE NVA 1972 SPRING OFFENSIVE.

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